

Washington, D.C. - Responding to alarming reports of high levels of toxic metals found in children's jewelry, Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08) sent a formal inquiry to the Consumer Product Safety Commission today, to inquire if safety officials have sufficient authority to deal with the problem.

"The CPSC's recent announcement that it is investigating heavy metals in certain children's products is encouraging," Bean's letter to CPSC Chairman Inez Tenenbaum says. "It is important to use the best science available to ascertain the level of the hazard and what additional safety measures, if any, are warranted. I wish to learn from you whether the agency lacks sufficient legal or regulatory authority to appropriately address this matter."

Recent reports by the Associated Press and others have documented high levels of cadmium in a range of products intended for children, particularly jewelry, and that cadmium and other heavy metals are quickly absorbed into the body if the product is swallowed. Cadmium is a highly dangerous substance that accumulates in the body and has been linked both to temporary illness and long-term problems, such as cancer, kidney disease, bone and lung damage, and learning disabilities.

Overseas manufacturers are apparently using cadmium as a substitute for lead, in response to Congress' sharp restrictions on lead levels in children's products in the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008.

The CPSC has reacted swiftly by opening a formal investigation and has already been at work on developing standards for heavy metals in children's products. However, it is unclear if the Commission has the full regulatory authority it needs to appropriately regulate cadmium and other heavy metals in toys and products intended for children.